

REMARKS

Claims 1-37 are now pending in the Office Action. Claims 1-29 have been rejected under 35 USC § 103(a), as being unpatentable over Larson et al. (U.S. Patent No. 5,825,854), in combination with Prust (U.S. Patent No. 6,714,968), and claims 30-37 are new. In addition, the specification has been objected to for the reasons given on page 2 of the Office Action (specifically, the inclusion of a hyperlink on at least page 15 of the specification).

Applicant's undersigned attorney would like to thank Examiner Harbeck and his supervisor, Mr. Chilcot, for their courtesy in participating in a telephonic interview on March 27, 2007. During the interview, Examiner Harbeck indicated that the objection to the specification was based on a misunderstanding of the purpose of the hyperlink in the disclosure and that this objection would be withdrawn. If our understanding of this is incorrect, the Examiner is respectfully asked to call applicant's attorney to resolve this issue. In addition, during the interview, we discussed the rejection of claims 1-29 based on the combination of Larson and Prust. Agreement as to allowable subject matter was not reached, although Examiner Harbeck agreed to discuss this case again with applicant's attorney following the filing of the present amendment along with a request for continued examination (RCE). Accordingly, the Examiner is respectfully asked to call applicant's attorney directly at **206.332.1384** to discuss the case or to schedule a telephonic interview before issuing any further rejections of the application.

We will now discuss the rejection under § 103(a).

The Rejection Under 35 USC § 103(a)

A. The Claimed Subject Matter

The present application discloses a system of which an illustrative embodiment detaches and stores e-mail attachments and replaces such attachments with "file handles". Moreover, the disclosed system enables remote control functions on such stored attachments without first downloading the attachments to a computer or other device. Referring to Figure 1 of the application, in the illustrated embodiments a "receiving portal" 12 can be a software program listening to a particular port of network 23 or a program which runs when an email is received within a range of email addresses. A "rights verifier" 15 (Figure 2) uses a

relational database 20 to associate the users' multiple email addresses to specific user ids 36, the user ids to file handles 37, and the file handles to specific file paths 38 on storage device 18. Moreover, a "command executor" 16 (Figure 3) accepts the command specification 6 or the command and parameters and the file 8 from the storage device 18, and the command executor includes application programs such as file format conversions, 56 and 60, access to the storage devices 62 and 54, and connection to email 64 and 52, fax 56, and 15 phone 60 portals enabling the desired remote control management and manipulation of the file 8.

In the embodiment shown in applicant's Figure 4, an e-mail item 14 includes several components, namely, a user identification 2, file handle 4, and command specification 6. In the embodiment of Figure 4, the user identification 2 is directly in the FROM address 22 of the e-mail item 14 and the command specification 6 is part of the destination e-mail address 26 at the domain address of the system. In the example of Figure 4, the command specification is in the TO: field and appears in the string "delete@thinmail.com", thus indicating that the file associated with the file handle is to be deleted. The command specification may also be part of the first line of the e-mail item or all or part of the subject line of the e-mail item 14. File handle 4 is parsed by recognizing a particular string 24 in the body of the message. Moreover, it is not a general URL but rather a particular key to a file stored in the storage device 8 and known to the user.

Figure 5 shows how the electronic mail item 14 contains a more secure user identification 2, including a temporary key 23 traveling as the REPLY-TO field of the electronic mail item 14. Figure 6 depicts an e-mail item for use to forward a file without having the file inside the e-mail device or attached to the e-mail item. Command specification 6, "forward@thinmail.com", is interpreted to forward the file specified by file handle 24 to the new recipient 27, which is the parameter to the forward command encoded in the subject field. Just as a fax command and fax number can be combined into a single email address encoded in the TO: header, the forward command 15 and recipient address can be combined.

Claim 1 represents an example of the claimed subject matter. This claim recites a system for management and manipulation of stored files through electronic mail items. The claimed system includes a "receiving portal," a "storage device," a "rights verifier," and a "command executor." Claim 1 recites that the receiving portal is for receiving . . . an electronic mail item including a first field containing a user identification, a second field

containing a file handle, and a third field containing a command specification. Claim 1 further recites that the rights verifier is for determining whether or not the sender has privilege to access the stored file corresponding to the file handle, and that the command executor executes the command specification on the file retrieved from the storage device when the sender is verified to have the access rights to the file. In addition, claim 1 now recites “a file handle recognizer configured to locate a file handle pattern within the electronic mail item.”

B. Differences Between the Claimed Subject Matter and the Prior Art

The principal reference applied in the rejection, Larson, discloses a system for accessing a computer through a telephone handset. With the system disclosed by Larson, a user is able to use a telephone handset to access electronic mail and to listen or reply to messages received by electronic mail. However, Larson lacks any teaching or suggestion of a system in which a receiving portal receives an electronic mail item including a user identification, a file handle, and a command specification, and wherein the system includes a rights verifier and command executor to execute commands on files pointed to by the file handle, in accordance with the command specification in the e-mail item.

In the Office Action, the Examiner has attempted to supplement Larson with Prust. Prust discloses a system in which access to a virtual storage area is integrated with an operating system (OS) executing on a client computer. As described at column 8, lines 9-23, the Prust system employs standard file management routines provided by the OS on the remote computer, and these are used to access files in the virtual storage area. In column 7, beginning at line 7, Prust discloses an embodiment in which the user accesses the virtual storage area using e-mail software 136. In this section of the disclosure, Prust describes how an e-mail software application may be used to store files in a virtual storage area or retrieve files therefrom, but he does not describe or suggest the mechanism recited in applicant's claims, namely, including a file handle and command specification within fields of an electronic mail item. For example, Prust's Figure 7 and the corresponding description thereof at column 7 lines 7-35 suggest that instead of including a “file handle” in the e-mail item, as recited in applicant's claim 1, Prust's system includes the actual file or, in the case of storing a file on the Internet into the storage server 21, a general URL pointing to the file on the Internet. See col. 7 lines 26-35:

In an alternative embodiment, the user does not attach a data file but includes within the electronic mail message a universal resource locator (URL) that indicates where storage server 210 can retrieve the data file to be stored. In order to retrieve one or more data files from storage server 210, the user sends a similar email requesting one or more target data files. In response, storage server 210 sends the user a response electronic mail message with the requested data files attached.

It does not appear that either Prust or Larson teaches or suggests, individually or in combination, a system that employs a receiving portal for receiving electronic mail items including . . . “a second field containing a file handle” and “a third field containing a command specification.” For example, Prust’s Figure 7 and the description thereof do not disclose the “command specification.”


In view of the foregoing, the Examiner is respectfully urged to reconsider the application and to withdraw the rejections.

Conclusion

A Notice of Allowance for claims 1-37 is respectfully solicited.

Respectfully submitted

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